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EDWIN GORDON/LOS ANGELES

ELECTION 76: THE SUBURBAN VOTER
(TAPE INSERTS IN TAPE LIBRARY)

ANNCR:

FOR A LOOK AT POLITICAL ATTITUDES AND TRADITIONS AMONG SUBURBAN VOTERS, VOA CORRESPONDENT EDWIN GORDON VISITED THE SAN FERNANDO VALLEY OUTSIDE OF LOS ANGELES IN THE WESTERN STATE OF CALIFORNIA. HERE IS HIS REPORT ON SUBURBIA AND THE SEVENTY-SIX ELECTIONS:

VOICE:

WITH MORE THAN ONE MILLION INHABITANTS, THE SAN FERNANDO VALLEY STRETCHES OUT BEHIND THE SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS JUST NORTH OF LOS ANGELES. IT IS A MIXED COMMUNITY -- OR SERIES OF SMALL COMMUNITIES. LARGE HOMES, SMALL APARTMENTS, HIGH WAGE EARNERS AND BUSINESSMEN, AND THOSE JUST GETTING ALONG. MANY WORK IN THE HUNDREDS OF SHOPPING CENTERS AND INDUSTRIAL PLANTS THROUGHOUT THE VALLEY. FOR MANY IT IS JUST A BEDROOM COMMUNITY -- THEIR JOBS ARE IN LOS ANGELES CITY. BUT FOR A GOOD PORTION, THE BIG ISSUE OF THIS ELECTION IS ECONOMICS. HERE'S A NINETEEN YEAR OLD COLLEGE STUDENT WHO WILL BE VOTING FOR THE FIRST TIME:

<u>TAPE: CUT ONE -- CUTLER</u>

"I WILL HAVE TO SUPPOSEDLY GO OUT INTO THE JOB MARKET, AND I AM CONCERNED ABOUT UNEMPLOYMENT, AND I WOULD LIKE SOMEBODY TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT UNEMPLOYMENT. I DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY CAN DO. I DON'T KNOW ENOUGH ABOUT THE SUBJECT, TO KNOW WHETHER WHAT MR. CARTER SAYS IS TRUE OR NOT. I DEFINITELY HAVE AN INTEREST IN OUR ECONOMY AND UNEMPLOYMENT. I BELIEVE THAT JUST ABOUT ALL OF THE ISSUES, WHEN YOU GET RIGHT DOWN TO IT, ARE ECONOMIC -- EVEN FOREIGN POLICY."

VOICE:

AND THE MAIN ISSUE IS SPECIFIC FOR AN ELDERLY WOMAN LIVING ON A FIXED RETIREMENT INCOME:

TAPE: CUT TWO -- WERNER

"THE PRICE OF FOOD IS VERY HIGH. THE AVERAGE FAMILY LIVES CLOSE TO THE BONE. AND SOMETHING MUST BE DONE ABOUT IT. A LOAF OF BREAD, WHICH IS NINETY-FIVE CENTS -- WHAT FAMILY COULD SPEND NINETY-FIVE CENTS FOR ONE LOAF OF BREAD? I'M SEVENTY-SIX YEARS OLD -- I'VE NEVER SEEN SUCH PRICES."

VOICE:

FOR A SUCCESSFUL TELEVISION ACTOR IT'S A MATTER OF ECONOMICS AND SOCIAL SERVICES:

TAPE: CUT THREE -- HANSEN

"I WOULD SAY HEALTH CARE, MEDICAL CARE, CONVALESCENT HOMES, CARE FOR THE AGED, EDUCATION -- WASTE IN ALL OF THESE DEPARTMENTS AND MISMANAGEMENT."

VOICE:

THE ACTOR, PETER HANSEN, WOULD LIKE TO SEE MORE OF A DECENTRALIZED GOVERNMENT, WHICH HE FEELS HAS BEEN AN AIM OF THE FORD ADMINISTRATION:

TAPE: CUT FOUR -- HANSEN

"I PERSONALLY FAVOR A STRONGER LOCAL GOVERNMENT. I THINK WE'VE BEEN SORT OF TUTORED OUT OF THE IDEA OF SOLVING OUR OWN PROBLEMS, TURNING IT OVER TO "GEORGE", OR CITY HALL, OR THE STATE LEGISLATURE, OR THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT -- RATHER THAN GETTING IN AND DOING SOMETHING ON OUR OWN, WHICH I THINK EVENTUALLY ERODES THE CHARACTER OF OUR PEOPLE."

VOICE:

ALSO ON A MORE GENERAL SCALE, THE ELDERLY WIDOW, HATTIE WERNER, FEELS THE ISSUE ABOVE ALL OTHER ISSUES IS THE PROPER FORM OF GOVERNMENT:

TAPE: CUT FIVE -- WERNER

"THE PROPER FORM OF GOVERNMENT. THE PROPER FORM OF GOVERNMENT IS GIVING PREFERENCE TO ALL THE PEOPLE, NOT JUST THE SPECIAL FEW."

VOICE:

HATTIE WERNER IS GOING TO VOTE THE DEMOCRATIC TICKET. THE YOUNG STUDENT, PETER CUTLER, HAS STILL NOT MADE UP HIS MIND:

TAPE: CUT SIX -- CUTLER

"MY FRIENDS THAT ARE GOING TO VOTE ARE PROBABLY VOTING DEMOCRATIC BECAUSE I THINK MOST OF MY FRIENDS COME FROM THE KIND OF BACKGROUND I DO -- SOMEWHAT LIBERAL. NOT THAT THIS YEAR'S ELECTION REPRESENTS ANY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LIBERAL AND CONSERVATIVE. THEY ARE BOTH MIDDLE-OF-THE-ROAD."

VOICE:

THIS BROUGHT TO MIND THE TURBULENT NINETEEN SIXTIES WHEN STUDENTS -- MANY OF THEM FROM THE SAME SUBURBAN-TYPE BACKGROUND PETER CUTLER COMES FROM -- WERE INVOLVED IN ALL SORTS OF POLITICAL PROTEST, SOME VOCIFEROUS, SOME VIOLENT, MUCH OF IT DISRUPTIVE. WE ASKED PETER -- A STUDENT OF MUSIC -- IF THE DAYS OF CAMPUS POLITICAL PROTEST ARE OVER:

TAPE: CUT SEVEN -- CUTLER

"I HOPE NOT. IT LOOKS SORT OF LIKE THAT. I MEAN, IT LOOKS LIKE ALL THE ANGRY YOUTH OF THE SIXTIES KIND OF GAVE UP. AND I JUST HOPE THEY HAVEN'T. I HOPE WE HAVEN'T TURNED INTO AN APATHETIC GROUP OF YOUNG PEOPLE BECAUSE I DON'T THINK IT'S GOING TO DO OUR COUNTRY ANY GOOD FOR US JUST TO SIT BACK AND ACCEPT WHAT THEY'RE TRYING TO FEED US. I THINK THAT A LOT OF YOUNG PEOPLE ARE VERY ANGRY RIGHT NOW. BUT I DON'T SEE THEM SHOWING IT LIKE THEY DID FIVE OR TEN YEARS AGO."

VOICE:

NONE OF THE PEOPLE WE INTERVIEWED FELT THE FORD-CARTER DEBATES HAD COME TO GRIPS WITH THE ISSUES. ONE PARTICULAR ISSUE THAT AFFECTS SUBURBIA GREATLY IS THE QUESTION OF ENERGY -- THE SPECTRE OF DWINDLING FUEL SUPPLIES FOR HEATING HOMES, THE PROBLEM OF INCREASING GASOLINE PRICES. BECAUSE THE SAN FERNANDO VALLEY -- LIKE MOST SUBURBAN AREAS -- IS AN AUTOMOBILE HAVEN. OUT OF NECESSITY. THE HECTARES AND HECTARES

OF NEW HOMES WOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN BUILT UP IN WHAT WERE ONCE CITRUS GROVES AND SMALL RANCHES IF IT HAD NOT BEEN FOR THE AUTOMOBILE. AND THE IDEA OF A GASOLINE SHORTAGE IS FRIGHTENING. AS MRS. WERNER PUT IT:

TAPE: CUT EIGHT -- WERNER

"THE PRICE OF GASOLINE IS SIXTY-FIVE...SIXTY-NINE CENTS A GALLON. IN THIS LOCALITY WHERE I LIVE, IF YOU DON'T DRIVE, YOU JUST STAY IN YOUR HOME. YOU MUST HAVE A CAR. IN CERTAIN AREAS YOU DON'T NEED IT, BUT HERE YOU DO, AND THE PRICE OF GAS IS EXORBITANT."

VOICE:

MRS. WERNER FEELS THAT IT IS THE DUTY OF THE GOVERNMENT TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT. WHAT, SHE DOES NOT KNOW, BUT SHE IS SURE THE DEMOCRATS WILL BE ABLE TO COPE WITH THE SITUATION. PETER HANSEN MAINTAINS, HOWEVER, THAT THE PROBLEM TRANSCENDS POLITICS, AND SHOULD NOT BE A POLITICAL ISSUE. IT'S BEEN AROUND TOO LONG FOR THAT, AND HE QUOTES FROM AN OLD CLARK GABLE MOVIE OF A GENERATION AND A HALF AGO TO MAKE HIS POINT:

TAPE: CUT NINE -- HANSEN

"REMEMBER ('BOOM TOWN?' WELL, IN THERE THEY'RE TALKING ABOUT: 'YOU'VE GOT TO REMEMBER -- IF YOU GO WITH THIS GUY, THEY'LL MAKE YOU PUMP THE OIL OIL REAL FAST AND THAT WAY YOU'LL LOSE PRESSURE AND HALF OF THE OIL WILL BE LEFT IN THE GROUND. GO WITH ME, WE'LL LET YOU DO IT SLOWER AND WE'LL GET IT ALL OUT. JUST REMEMBER, THERE'S ONLY SO MUCH OIL THAT THE GOOD LORD PUT IN THE EARTH, AND WE BETTER USE IT CAREFULLY.' NOW, THAT WAS...WHAT? NINETEEN THIRTY-SOMETHING OR OTHER. WE HAVE NOT FOUND THE PROBLEM, EVEN TODAY. AFTER THE ARAB BOYCOTT AND EVERYTHING ELSE, WE'VE GOT THE BLINDERS RIGHT BACK ON AGAIN AND ZOOMING ALONG. IT JUST CAN'T BE A POLITICAL SITUATION. IT'S GOT TO COME FROM THE GOOD SENSE OF THE PEOPLE. AND APPARENTLY THAT'S GOING TO GET PUSHED AT WHEN SUDDENLY THEY'RE OUT OF GAS."

VOICE:

SO FOR PETER HANSEN OF SUBURBAN SAN FERNANDO VALLEY, LESS CENTRALIZED GOVERNMENT IS BETTER GOVERNMENT, AND THAT'S WHY HE'S GOING TO VOTE FOR GERALD FORD. THAT AND A MATTER OF TRADITION:

TAPE: CUT TEN -- HANSEN

"MY PARENTS WERE REPUBLICANS, AND I HAVE BEEN A REPUBLICAN, AND MY KIDS ARE PRETTY MUCH REPUBLICANS. WE HAVE VOTED IN THE PAST FOR DEMOCRATS FOR PRESIDENT, BUT BY AND LARGE I THINK THE FORD ADMINISTRATION HAS DONE A GOOD JOB WITH WHAT WAS LEFT FOR THEM TO DO."

VOICE:

IF IT IS A MATTER OF TRADITION WITH PETER HANSEN, SO IT IS ALSO WITH HATTIE WERNER, DESPITE THE QUESTIONS, DESPITE THE CONFUSIONS SHE SAYS SHE SEES IN THE CURRENT CAMPAIGN.

TAPE: CUT ELEVEN -- WERNER

"I LIKE THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY. THAT'S MY AFFILIATED PARTY AND I'M STILL A LITTLE LEERY ABOUT THEM. THOUGH I CAN'T SEE MYSELF VOTING FOR ANY OTHER PARTY. I WILL VOTE -- REGARDLESS OF WHAT. I'M GOING TO VOTE. I MUST TAKE THIS INITIATIVE. MAYBE IT WILL DO SOMETHING."

VOICE:

AND THE SAME FOR STUDENT PETER CUTLER -- YOUNG, CYNICAL, FRUSTRATED IN A WAY. BUT NOT TOO YOUNG OR TOO CYNICAL OR TOO FRUSTRATED TO GIVE UP HIS BALLOT:

TAPE: CUT TWELVE -- CUTLER

"I'M VOTING BECAUSE I THINK IT WOULD BE A WASTE FOR ME NOT TO. IF I'M GOING TO HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH THIS COUNTRY. YOU KNOW, I HAVEN'T GOT A RIGHT TO COMPLAIN UNLESS I'M GOING TO TAKE SOME PART IN THE GOVERNMENT."

VOICE:

PETER CUTLER SAYS HE HAS NOT MADE UP HIS MIND YET WHO HIS CANDIDATE WILL BE -- MARK HIM DOWN AS UNDECIDED. SO, THERE YOU HAVE A MICROSCOPIC PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY OF ONE SUBURBAN DISTRICT: A REPUBLICAN, DEMOCRAT, AND AN UNDECIDED. YOU CAN FIND THE SAME MIX, AND THE SAME QUESTIONS, AND THE SAME CONCERNS IN MANY A SUBURBAN COMMUNITY THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES.

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